



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Interim Secretary

DATE: August 22, 2014

TO: Regional Managing Directors
Community-Based Care Lead Agency CEOs

FROM:  Pete Digre, Deputy Secretary
 Janice Thomas, Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare

SUBJECT: Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program

INFORMATIONAL MEMO

PURPOSE: This memorandum provides information regarding the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program and addresses how to apply for the program.

BACKGROUND: During the 2014 legislative session, the Florida Legislature created section 402.403, Florida Statutes to establish the **Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program** for the purposes of recruiting and retaining high-performing individuals who have either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in social work and are employed as child protection or child welfare personnel.

For this program:

Child protection personnel include:

- Child Protective Investigators (CPI);
- Senior CPIs; and
- CPI Supervisors;

Child welfare personnel include:

- Case Managers; and
- Case Manager Supervisors.

Requirements of the Program:

- Child protection personnel must be employed with the Department of Children and Families
- Child welfare personnel must be employed by a Community-Based Care Lead Agency or a subcontractor of a Community-Based Care Lead Agency
- The applicant must be a high performing employee, completing job duties and responsibilities at an achievement rate established by his or her employer and reflected on his or her most recent performance evaluation

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

- The applicant must have either a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree in the area of Social Work

Requirements for the Loan Forgiveness Payment:

- Loan payments are up to \$3,000 a year based on application approval and legislative appropriation
- Payments will be awarded on a first come, first serve basis
- All payments are made directly to the holder of the loan
- Only loans to pay the costs of tuition, books, fees, and living expenses are eligible for reimbursement

Throughout the state, "high performing employee" is defined as achieving a minimum score of *at least* 70% of an employer's overall performance evaluation total. However, individual employers may set standards that exceed the 70% minimum requirement based on the agency's minimal "meets expectation" designation. For those individuals employed by the state, a minimum overall score of 3.5 must have been achieved on the employee's last performance evaluation to be eligible to participate in the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program.

For those individuals who participate in the loan forgiveness program, the individual must remain employed by the Department, a state agency, or a contracted provider for 5 years after July 1, 2014, or 5 years following the completion of the graduate level social work degree, whichever is later. If employment ends before the 5-year period is fulfilled, the benefit shall be repaid to the Department of Children and Families according to a pro rata calculation based on the number of years of service.

According to section 402.404(7), Florida Statutes, the Department of Children and Families shall prioritize funds appropriated to regions with high-average case loads and low workforce-retention rates. Regions meeting these criteria will be determined during the application scoring period using data from the first quarter of this fiscal year. Therefore, all eligible, interested child protection and child welfare personnel are encouraged to apply.

The application for the Child Protection and Child Welfare Loan Forgiveness program will be available on the Florida's Center for Child Welfare's website at: <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/LegislativeChanges/SB1666.shtml> under the heading of "Student Loan Forgiveness". Applications will be accepted from 8:00 am, Eastern Standard Time (EST) on October 1, 2014 through October 31, 2014 at 5:00 pm EST. Completed applications should be emailed to loan_forgiveness@dcf.state.fl.us.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please disseminate this memorandum and the attached Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program Criteria to all child protection investigators and child protective investigator supervisors employed by the Department of Children and Families, and all case managers and case manager

supervisors employed by a Community-Based Care Lead Agency or a community-based care subcontracted agency.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Questions or requests for additional information may be directed to Jane McElroy, Legislative and Budget Consultant, at (850)717-4671 or loan_forgiveness@dcf.state.fl.us.

ATTACHMENT: Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program Criteria

cc: Traci Leavine, Director of Child Welfare Practice
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